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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 426
By Cooper B

A RESOLUTION to honor A. C. Wharton, Memphis attorney and Shelby County Public Defender for his noteworthy and outstanding service.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this Tennessee General Assembly should recognize men and women of stature, who continually endeavor to serve the public; and

WHEREAS, A.C. Wharton, Esquire is one such attorney who is deserving of recognition, as exemplified by his stalwart and unmitigated commitment to representing those clients whose cases are deemed undesirable by most of his colleagues; and

WHEREAS, Attorney Wharton was inducted into the American College of Trial Lawyers in 1999, and received the West Tennessee Civil Liberties Union's Bill of Rights Award in 1980; and

WHEREAS, he and his wife, Ruby, are partners in the law firm of Wharton & Wharton & Associates; and

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WHEREAS, Attorney Wharton earned his undergraduate degree in political science from Tennessee State University in 1966, and graduated from the University of Mississippi Law School in 1971; and

WHEREAS, A.C. Wharton co-chaired Mayor Willie Herenton's 1999 re-election campaign, and has worked on and contributed to numerous other political campaigns; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wharton is professor at the University of Mississippi, and has served astutely in such position since 1974; and

WHEREAS, he is the first African American appointed to the Brooks Art Gallery Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, he currently is chairman of the Shelby County Jail Overcrowding Committee, a position he has held since 1989; and

WHEREAS, he has spent the past twenty years building an illustrious career as a criminal defense attorney and public servant; serving as Shelby County Public Defender since 1980; and

WHEREAS, this acclaimed lawyer has taken extraordinary steps to demonstrate his professionalism and pride in delivering quality representation to his clients; and

WHEREAS, one of the best criminal defense attorneys in Memphis, he is notoriously methodical, empathetic, focused, and down-to-earth, which makes it very easy for his clients to put their trust in him, and equally as important, for his peers to respect him; and

WHEREAS, famous clientele are no strangers to this outstanding attorney, for he has also ably represented the Honorable Senator John Newton Ford; and

WHEREAS, Attorney Wharton was recently reappointed by Governor Don Sundquist to serve on the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, which decides matters of policy and funding for higher education; he was elected by this body to chair it; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wharton has stated, " The bad cases are also the ones that say to law enforcement that no matter how horrible the case is, in this country you follow the law in investigating this case. If they have to follow that in those tough cases, it sets the bar high...the protection that's given those cases benefit the society as a whole"; and

WHEREAS, Attorney General Bill Gibbons has said the following regarding this esteemed professional: "A good measure of the high esteem in which Wharton is held is proven by his ability to transcend traditional political divisions"; former Tennessee Attorney General and U.S. Attorney, Mike Cody, stated, "...win, lose, or draw, the client really feels like A.C. was there for him. There are very few lawyers who can do that"; and

WHEREAS, Republican Mayor Jim Rout has reappointed Attorney Wharton to continue his meritorious tenure as Shelby County public defender; and

WHEREAS, A.C. Wharton's early influence was none other than Attorney Avon Nyanza Williams, Jr., civil rights hero, who once represented a man in Wharton's hometown of Lebanon, and who initiated the desegregation of the University of Tennessee in the cases *Gray versus University of Tennessee*, and *Geier versus Blanton* in 1977, which merged the University of Tennessee-Nashville with Tennessee State University; and

WHEREAS, the such renowned professionals such as A.C. Wharton are known and respected for their deeds, not merely their words; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend the brave and upstanding A.C. Wharton, Esquire for his service as a criminal defense attorney and as Shelby County Public Defender. We also extend our best wishes for his success and continued excellence in the practice of law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

